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Indian Classical Movies: A Cultural Heritage

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ANNOTATION

Art reflects life in different forms, whether painting, music, poetry and even movies. Amongst all the forms of art available, none has a farther reach than films. For many years, movie producers have used human emotions to captivate people and educate them. India's Bollywood film industry has been up and doing in this regard, releasing movie scripts that show the rich culture of India. Everyone, especially outsiders and foreigners, can tell the beauty of the Indian culture. Without stepping foot in India, one can tell that the significant elements in the country's culture –dance, music, mathematics, language, cuisine, and interestingly gambling.

KEYWORDS: movies, Indian, culture, classical, heritage, scripts, country, educate, beauty, art.

Introduction

Pather Panchali literally translates as Song of the little road, and the movie is all about the culture and life in the rural areas of India. This vintage film counts as one of the best movies of all time. The movie director Satyajit Ray sits in India's movie industry's hall of fame as one of the best film directors in India. Working with a small budget, the movie *Pather Panchali* was his debut. Even with the obvious constraints, he was able to portray the pastoral life of Bengal alongside his needy family members. With this real showcase of India's rural beauty, it wasn't surprising that Ray won the heart of many people both in India and beyond, even with his silver screen.

Everyone will agree that **the great gambler** is one of the elements of Indian culture. It started years ago, and now it has evolved to a stage where people have direct access to the best *Andar Bahar* casinos on the internet. The great gambler, our next movie, was produced at a time when online gambling was almost nonexistent. The film was the first action thriller to come up with gambling as a central theme. It had one of the most massive movie budgets that period because it's featured scenes from Venice, Rome, Lisbon, etc. The plot was about an expert gambler who had never lost a game. To ascertain the wasn't being fraudulent, a police inspector was assigned to investigate the gambler.

Research into the culture of India would never be complete except there are some names in it. **Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi** is one of those names. During his life, the Indian lawyer fought for the liberation of his people from British colonial rule. This movie which David Attenborough directed was to show the life and times of Mahatma Gandhi and his non-violent struggle for independence. The epic biography movie was so good it won an Oscar nomination in 1982 and several awards after that. It shows how non-violent agitation can win a war against impunity and cruelty.



Nothing shows culture better than a historical documentary movie. The next film on our list is a classic that takes its inspiration from another classic written by E.M. Forster. In this film, you will see the real relationship between the people of India and their British colonizers. The movie, which is set before the independence of India, examines the sufferings of the people and how independence came to be. *Passage to India* explores India through the lens of Mrs. Moore, a fictional character in the movie, and what she believes is the true India.

Indians love the game of cricket. The love is so profound that cricket has become a part of their culture, like soccer is in England and American football is in the US. This beautiful movie correctly depicts the love of Indians for this beautiful game of cricket and the beauty of rural Indian life before independence. In English, **Lagaan** translates as Tax which is the central theme of the movie. The movie tells a story about how some villagers in some parts of India had to play cricket just so they can avoid paying unfair taxes to the British government. In the end, the people were able to win using the passion and love for the beautiful game of cricket.

If you are tired of seeing old Indian movies and the British colonizers' cruelty, head on to 2006 as we explore some of the issues in modern-day India. In this thrilling movie, a British Indian returns home to make a documentary about a group of freedom fighters called the **Bhagat Singh** and the **Chandrashekhar Azad**, and many more. Even though her grandfather was a police officer, she soon becomes a part of the crisis. The movie helps you see India's new country in light of growing corruption and how it affects the system.

Discussion

Among the winners are directors **Guru Dutt**, **Bimal Roy** and **Raj Kapoor**—names synonymous with masterpiece Indian cinema—each with multiple films among Bollywood's all-time greatest. Always wondered why a couple of young Harvard students like us love old Indian films so passionately? No matter what you think you know about Bollywood, the movies on this list will change your understanding of Indian films like never before. From village epics that grapple with our national identity to the nostalgic poetry of sudden disillusionment, classic Bollywood films transport us from the enchanting glamour of Bombay nightlife to the majestic gardens of Kashmir. They carry our souls through hardship and loss and revive our spirits with redemption.

Pyasa, or "thirst," is the story of one man's search for compassion in the cold cynicism of post-independence Indian society. Vijay is an unpublished poet, dismissed by his own family and scorned by socialites and his colleagues. After befriending a prostitute who shelters him, Vijay is believed dead and his poetry "posthumously" lionized. He becomes an overnight sensation, mourned by fans across the country, and the true Vijay is labeled an imposter. India entered its golden age of filmmaking in the 1950s when its long-awaited freedom from England and the hopes of a new government created a social tinderbox of great expectations and disillusionment. Pioneering the technique of utilizing song lyrics as direct extensions of the

film's dialogue, Guru Dutt as the writer-producer-director-star paints a stirring portrait of the commodification of humanity.

At the turn of the 17th century, Prince Salim falls in love with the court dancer Anarkali and wages war against his own father, Emperor Akbar, in order to marry her. Director K. Asif's enormous cast, opulent sets, intricately designed costumes and extravagantly staged battle scenes made the film the most expensive ever produced in India at the time. But despite of all the grandeur, the film has a warm heart, and the dangers of the romance between Salim and Anarkali are infused into each glance they share. Although the love story is the backbone of the film, it is Emperor Akbar, from whom the film derives its name ("the Great Mughal"), who takes center stage as he is torn between love for his only son and the unforgiving demands of the Mughal Empire. Every line of dialogue is written with the ornamentation of poetry, casting an elegance to **Mughal-e Azam's** thunderous power.

In the grandeur of Muslim Lucknow at the turn of the century, Pakeezah is a courtesan and dancer who dreams of leaving her life behind when a stranger falls in love with her in a train compartment, not knowing her true profession. With swirling romanticism and languid, dream-like cinematography, **Pakeezah** instantly became one of the most extraordinary musicals ever made. Perfectionist director Kamal Amrohi, who also wrote the script and some of the lyrics, effectively transports the viewer into a wistful age of bygone formality and luxury. Each of Pakeezah's popular semi-classical songs illustrates the duality of a courtesan's poetry, at once glamorizing the elaborate rituals of love and destroying the institutions that upheld them.

With tragedy strikes her family, newlywed village belle Radha is determined to weather a crucible of social and personal adversities without compromising her honor. In doing so, she reinvents herself as a heavy-handed symbol of India's own pride as an ancient culture and a new democracy. A defining film in the history of Bollywood, director Mehboob Khan's iconic **Mother India** set the pattern for the more than 60 years of Bollywood film that followed it. A mythologization of traditional values and an homage to the beauty of Indian heritage, Mother India's unabashedly epic glorification of self-sacrifice and female empowerment was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film in 1958.



A corrupt businessman is transformed into a spiritual guide after a misunderstanding that leads to his idolization by a village besieged by drought. Based on the R.K. Narayan novel of the same name and bolstered by a stunning soundtrack, **Guide** explores a fundamental Vedic transformation from materialism to a release from worldly attachments in an extremely unlikely hero. A scandalous love story settles into the background as director Vijay Anand boldly deconstructs social taboos, from adultery and non-traditional gender roles to religious fraud, in a film that stirringly evolves into a philosophical awakening greater than the circumstances it portrays—a brilliant reflection of the double entendre intended by its title.

In the 1950s at the height of India's golden age of film-making, a celebrated movie director feels uninspired by the tinsel-lined glitz of studio era Bollywood. When he discovers a new actress, innocent to the corruption of the industry, he believes he has found a muse to ease his restlessness. A elegiac behind-the-scenes film about film-making, **Kaaghaz Ke Phool** became a cult classic following the eerie semi-autobiographical death of its director Guru Dutt. Trapped in a world of pretense, Guru Dutt illustrates a kind of yearning that softly and slowly erodes the soul—a desperate hunt for a human connection. The real triumph is in the film's stunning camerawork, gracefully gliding through the empty studio sets like a beautiful spectre of Dutt's own shattered desires.

A female lawyer is determined to prove her lover's innocence in a murder attempt on the life of a respected judge. Structured in medias res, the film's flashback reveals the injustice of her lover's past when the very judge who condemns him proves to be his own father: a man who threw his wife onto the streets when he believed a criminal had raped her. Echoing the dark lessons of the ancient Ramayana, **Awaara** shatters the nature versus nurture debate with a showman's flair and surrealist fantasy, including the film's legendary dream sequence evoking a descent into Hell. Awaara launched Raj Kapoor's famous Chaplin-esque hero for the first time, who resonated immensely across the Soviet Union and Communist China as the voice of a new generation.

Desperate to save her marriage, the younger daughter-in-law of a wealthy family sacrifices her moral boundaries to win over her alcoholic husband. A nostalgic glimpse into the decaying Bengali feudal system, **Sahib, Bibi, Aur Ghulam** unravels a dazzling murder mystery at the heart of its progressive view of societal redemption. Seen from the perspective of a young factory worker lured into a stately mansion as an ally of its young mistress, Sahib, Bibi, Aur Ghulam hauntingly opens the doors to the hollowness of exterior splendor. Spiraling against her will with the collapse of Calcutta's landed aristocracy, Meena Kumari's portrayal of the tormented wife is forever considered among the most magnificent on-screen performances of Bollywood history.

When her lover dies at war, an unwed mother gives up her son up for adoption, vowing to watch over him in secrecy as he grows up in the house of another. Her poignant worship, or aradhana, of her dead fiancé and their son became immortalized in the Indian cinematic psyche as an audacious struggle of traditional society confronted by changing modern values. Boasting one of the all-time greatest soundtracks of Indian cinema, **Aradhana** epitomizes the versatility and creativity of the era's leading music directors. From the youthful romance of "Kora Kaagaz Tha" to the grim Bardic undertones of "Safal Hogi Teri Aradhana" to the notoriously seductive "Roop Tera Mastana," the film is as much remembered for its luminous performances as for exemplifying the golden age of Bollywood music.

A farming family fights to save their ancestral land from a cunning mill owner. **Do Bigha Zameen** follows the father and son's trip to Calcutta from their idyllic village to earn enough money to pay their debts—only to discover the miseries of urban poverty instead. Inspired by the work of Italian neorealism, Do Bigha

Zameen pioneered early parallel cinema with a deliberate attention to the “everyday,” and the feeling of an invisible, unhurried camera whose shots and mis-en-scene are both carefully constructed and effortlessly fluid. Directed by Bengali auteur Bimal Roy, the film’s nationalistic electricity hit a broader audience, becoming the first Indian film to win the Prix Internationale at the 1954 Cannes Film Festival.

Bandini, During the British Raj of the 1930s, a prison doctor falls in love with a convict who reveals the story of her tumultuous connection to a freedom fighter.



Ankur-The social hierarchies of rural India are disrupted when a landowner begins an affair with a poor farmer’s wife.



After returning from war, a soldier begins to lead a double-life when his doppelgänger’s family welcomes him home.

Two men with different ideals of love search for answers with the coming of the monsoons.

A doctor recounts the story of a terminally ill man who wishes to live his life to the fullest and spread happiness to those around him.

Results

Hindi cinema, popularly known as Bollywood and formerly as Bombay cinema, is the Indian Hindi-language film industry based in Mumbai (formerly Bombay). The popular term Bollywood, used to refer to mainstream Hindi cinema, is a portmanteau of "Bombay" and "Hollywood". The industry is part of the larger Indian cinema—the world's largest by number of feature films produced, along with the Cinema of South India and other Indian film industries.

In 2017, Indian cinema produced 1,986 feature films, with the Hindi film industry as its largest filmmaker, producing 364 Hindi films the same year. As per data from 2014, Hindi cinema represented 43 percent of

Indian net box-office revenue; Tamil and Telugu cinema represented 36 percent, and the remaining regional cinema constituted 21 percent. Hindi cinema has overtaken the U.S. film industry to become the largest centre for film production in the world. In 2001 ticket sales, Indian cinema (including Hindi films) reportedly sold an estimated 3.6 billion tickets worldwide, compared to Hollywood's 2.6 billion tickets sold. Earlier Hindi films tended to use vernacular Hindustani, mutually intelligible by speakers of either Hindi or Urdu, while modern Hindi productions increasingly incorporate elements of Hinglish.

The most popular commercial genre in Hindi cinema since the 1970s has been the masala film, which freely mixes different genres including action, comedy, romance, drama and melodrama along with musical numbers. Masala films generally fall under the musical film genre, of which Indian cinema has been the largest producer since the 1960s when it exceeded the American film industry's total musical output after musical films declined in the West; the first Indian musical talkie was *Alam Ara* (1931), several years after the first Hollywood musical talkie *The Jazz Singer* (1927). Alongside commercial masala films, a distinctive genre of art films known as parallel cinema has also existed, presenting realistic content and avoidance of musical numbers. In more recent years, the distinction between commercial masala and parallel cinema has been gradually blurring, with an increasing number of mainstream films adopting the conventions which were once strictly associated with parallel cinema.

The 1930s and 1940s were tumultuous times; India was buffeted by the Great Depression, World War II, the Indian independence movement, and the violence of the Partition. Although most early Bombay films were unabashedly escapist, a number of filmmakers tackled tough social issues or used the struggle for Indian independence as a backdrop for their films. Irani made the first Hindi colour film, *Kisan Kanya*, in 1937. The following year, he made a colour version of *Mother India*. However, colour did not become a popular feature until the late 1950s. At this time, lavish romantic musicals and melodramas were cinematic staples.

By 1970, Hindi cinema was thematically stagnant and dominated by musical romance films. The arrival of screenwriting duo Salim-Javed (Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar) was a paradigm shift, revitalising the industry. They began the genre of gritty, violent, Bombay underworld crime films early in the decade with films such as *Zanjeer* (1973) and *Deewaar* (1975). Salim-Javed reinterpreted the rural themes of Mehboob Khan's *Mother India* (1957) and Dilip Kumar's *Gunga Jumna* (1961) in a contemporary urban context, reflecting the socio-economic and socio-political climate of 1970s India and channeling mass discontent, disillusionment and the unprecedented growth of slums with anti-establishment themes and those involving urban poverty, corruption and crime. Their "angry young man", personified by Amitabh Bachchan, reinterpreted Dilip Kumar's performance in *Gunga Jumna* in a contemporary urban context and anguished urban poor.

By the mid-1970s, romantic confections had given way to gritty, violent crime films and action films about gangsters (the Bombay underworld) and bandits (dacoits). Salim-Javed's writing and Amitabh Bachchan's acting popularised the trend with films such as *Zanjeer* and (particularly) *Deewaar*, a crime film inspired by *Gunga Jumna* which pitted "a policeman against his brother, a gang leader based on real-life smuggler Haji Mastan" (Bachchan); according to Danny Boyle, *Deewaar* was "absolutely key to Indian cinema". In addition to Bachchan, several other actors followed by riding the crest of the trend (which lasted into the early 1990s). Actresses from the era include Hema Malini, Jaya Bachchan, Raakhee, Shabana Azmi, Zeenat Aman, Parveen Babi, Rekha, Dimple Kapadia, Smita Patil, Jaya Prada and Padmini Kolhapure.

Some Hindi filmmakers, such as Shyam Benegal, Mani Kaul, Kumar Shahani, Ketan Mehta, Govind Nihalani and Vijaya Mehta, continued to produce realistic parallel cinema throughout the 1970s. Although the art film

bent of the Film Finance Corporation was criticised during a 1976 Committee on Public Undertakings investigation which accused the corporation of not doing enough to encourage commercial cinema, the decade saw the rise of commercial cinema with films such as *Sholay* (1975) which consolidated Amitabh Bachchan's position as a star. The devotional classic *Jai Santoshi Ma* was also released that year.

By 1983, the Bombay film industry was generating an estimated annual revenue of ₹ 700 crore (₹ 7 billion, \$693.14 million), equivalent to \$1.89 billion (₹ 12,667 crore, ₹ 111.33 billion) when adjusted for inflation. By 1986, India's annual film output had increased from 741 films produced annually to 833 films annually, making India the world's largest film producer. The most internationally acclaimed Hindi film of the 1980s was Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay!* (1988), which won the Camera d'Or at the 1988 Cannes Film Festival and was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

Conclusions

Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake identify six major influences which have shaped Indian popular cinema:

The branching structures of ancient Indian epics, like the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Indian popular films often have plots which branch off into sub-plots.

Ancient Sanskrit drama, with its stylised nature and emphasis on spectacle in which music, dance and gesture combine "to create a vibrant artistic unit with dance and mime being central to the dramatic experience." Matthew Jones of De Montfort University also identifies the Sanskrit concept of *rasa*, or "the emotions felt by the audience as a result of the actor's presentation", as crucial to Bollywood films.

Traditional folk theater, which became popular around the 10th century with the decline of Sanskrit theater. Its regional traditions include the *Jatra* of Bengal, the *Ramlila* of Uttar Pradesh, and the *Terukkuttu* of Tamil Nadu.

Parsi theatre, which "blended realism and fantasy, music and dance, narrative and spectacle, earthy dialogue and ingenuity of stage presentation, integrating them into a dramatic discourse of melodrama. The Parsi plays contained crude humour, melodious songs and music, sensationalism and dazzling stagecraft."

Hollywood, where musicals were popular from the 1920s to the 1950s.

Western musical television (particularly MTV), which has had an increasing influence since the 1990s. Its pace, camera angles, dance sequences and music may be seen in 2000s Indian films. An early example of this approach was Mani Ratnam's *Bombay* (1995).

Sharmistha Gooptu identifies Indo-Persian-Islamic culture as a major influence. During the early 20th century, Urdu was the lingua franca of popular cultural performance across northern India and established in popular performance art traditions such as *nautch* dancing, Urdu poetry, and Parsi theater. Urdu and related Hindi dialects were the most widely understood across northern India, and Hindustani became the standard language of early Indian talkies. Films based on "Persianate adventure-romances" led to a popular genre of "Arabian Nights cinema".

Scholars Chaudhuri Diptakirti and Rachel Dwyer and screenwriter Javed Akhtar identify Urdu literature as a major influence on Hindi cinema. Most of the screenwriters and scriptwriters of classic Hindi cinema came from Urdu literary backgrounds, from Khwaja Ahmad Abbas and Akhtar ul Iman to Salim-Javed and Rahi Masoom Raza; a handful came from other Indian literary traditions, such as Bengali and Hindi literature. Most

of Hindi cinema's classic scriptwriters wrote primarily in Urdu, including Salim-Javed, Gulzar, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Inder Raj Anand, Rahi Masoom Raza and Wajahat Mirza. Urdu poetry and the ghazal tradition strongly influenced filmi (Bollywood lyrics). Javed Akhtar was also greatly influenced by Urdu novels by Pakistani author Ibn-e-Safi, such as the Jasoosi Dunya and Imran series of detective novels; they inspired, for example, famous Bollywood characters such as Gabbar Singh in *Sholay* (1975) and Mogambo in *Mr. India* (1987).

Todd Stadtman identifies several foreign influences on 1970s commercial Bollywood masala films, including New Hollywood, Italian exploitation films, and Hong Kong martial arts cinema. After the success of Bruce Lee films (such as *Enter the Dragon*) in India, *Deewaar* (1975) and other Bollywood films incorporated fight scenes inspired by 1970s martial arts films from Hong Kong cinema until the 1990s. Bollywood action scenes emulated Hong Kong rather than Hollywood, emphasising acrobatics and stunts and combining kung fu (as perceived by Indians) with Indian martial arts such as *pehlwani*.

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